

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Leonie's Favor

By INA WRIGHT HANSON.

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Against a great rock we sat, Leonie and I, and Leonie was reading aloud. Yesterday we had sat there, and the day before and many days before that, reading or talking or looking silently at the sea foam piling up against other rocks out in the blue distance, and every day I had loved Leonie more.

On this day I had thought to tell her so, but now that the day had come my words were held. Before me stood duty, grim visaged and cruel eyed. Beside me sat Leonie, slim, radiant, entrancing.

"Fair lord, whose name I know not—no, his is; I will believe the noblest—will you wear my favor at this journey?" "Nay," said he.

"Fair lady, since I never yet have worn favor of any lady in the lists."

Leonie looked up at me, her brown eyes full of the glory of the master poet.

"Shouldn't you like to have lived in those days?" she asked. "Think of it—"



"I SHOULD STAY AT HOME AND PRAY AND WAIT."

...ing your lady's favor and kissing her hand and riding away and riding home again! Ah, but my part—waiting at home while my knight was in danger! That I shouldn't like."

"Maybe when he was about to ride away you would have called him back," I ventured. "Maybe you would have said: 'I need you to take care of me. Let others do the fighting.' Would you, Leonie?"

"One can never tell what one will do till the time comes," she answered, and would have turned to her book again, but my hand stayed her.

"Let me tell you a story, Leonie. Once there was an orphan boy who was adopted by a man and brought up as his own son. The boy had been left money, but the man gave to him other things—love and sympathy, encouragement and trust. When the boy had grown to a man the foster father sent him out into the world to accomplish his heart's desire. Did I say that the boy's ambition was to write?"

"I understand, Arthur," she smiled. "When the boy was going away he tried to tell the man what he felt of gratitude to him, but the man laid his kind old hand on the boy's shoulder and said, 'Never mind that now, but some time when I make a request of you you will grant it.' And of course the boy thought then, and said so, that any request would be small in comparison with what the man had done for him."

"In a few years the young man had become reasonably successful. In the many times he saw his foster father the request was not mentioned, but the boy had not forgotten. Then one day he met you, and you know what that meant to him. You must know, Leonie."

"I think I understand, Arthur," she whispered, coloring. "Last night the letter came. My foster father has made known his request."

It was difficult to go on, looking into Leonie's eyes, so full of trust and happiness, and—yes, I could see—so full of love.

"The request is a year out of my life to be spent with him—a year free of all entanglements, as he expresses it, in the matter of love affairs. It means neither to see nor hear from the woman I love. It means that if I grant the favor I may not even tell the woman I love her and ask her to wait till the year is done. Why couldn't he have asked any other thing under the sun? It must be a mere whim." I finished hotly.

Leonie was silent for a time. Her eyes turned away from me, gazing out on the feathery spray in the blue distance.

"We may all be dead in a year," I exclaimed wrathfully.

Then Leonie sighed and turned her face to me and laid her slim hand on my sleeve.

"The future is not ours," she answered gravely. "Only today. It may be a whim, but I think he has a reason, and you promised to grant his request when he should ask it. I know now what I should do if these were the days of knight-hood."

"What, Leonie? I asked sadly, for now I knew that I must go.

"I should give my knight his favor and send him away, and I should stay at home and pray and wait."

"Oh, Leonie!" I whispered. "Leonie!" She took from the lace at her white throat a tiny blue and gold swastika and pinned it on my coat.

"This is instead of the red sleeve brodered with pearls," she smiled, though her eyes were wet. "And you shall wear it on your coat instead of your helmet. Do you know what it signifies, brave knight?"

"It brings good luck and is a talisman to ward off the evil eye," I answered, smiling, too, for had she not called me brave?

"That and more. The colors are loyalty and royalty. The up and down points are heaven and earth, the right and left behind you and before you—time and eternity. The symbol means that you are not free from personal responsibility while you wear it. It means noblesse oblige, dear knight. Ride forth to your promise; be brave and strong, and victory will be yours."

So I kissed my lady's favor and then her hand and rode away.

Aside from my desire for Leonie or news concerning her, my year with my foster father was a pleasant one. His library was full of books, his mind a storehouse of ideas concerning travel, history and romance. He gave me my mornings for writing, and I wrote much, glad that out in the world Leonie was reading and waiting.

The request he had asked might have been a whim, but he gave, leaving Leonie out of the question, much more than he could have received. The year was nearing its close when he spoke to me of my future.

"You have no idea of what these months have been to me, Arthur," he said as we were walking one evening by the lake in his meadow.

"And they have been much to me, sir," I answered truthfully.

"What would it mean to you to have them last?" he asked, hitting some goldenrod sprays with his cane, his eyes on the yellow blossoms.

"It couldn't be quite like this, sir," I answered slowly, and then I told him about Leonie and the swastika.

"It wasn't a whim, boy, that has kept you here," he replied, with a smile on his fine old face. "You had begun writing to me of this Leonie, and it happened that I had seen the girl, though she had not known my name. I wanted to test her, boy. You have a future before you which must not be spoiled by the wrong woman. Tomorrow go back to her and if she will come bring her to me. The old house needs you both."

I had thought to find my lady where I had left her, but she was standing under some poplar trees near her own gate. As I came in sight of her a vagrant breeze touched the trees, and a shower of yellow leaves fell around her like golden butterflies. I urged my horse forward and sprang from my saddle.

I had thought to greet her in words of the master poet, in language befitting her true knight come safely home, but all my stammering tongue could utter as her glad, welcoming face was raised to mine was: "Leonie! Oh, Leonie!"

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